

## TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

Captain Craig Borgstrom

Operations Officer, 119<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing / Alert Detachment 1

Conducted Thursday, 25 October 2001 at Langley AFB, VA

Interviewer: Master Sergeant David E. Somdahl, 119 FW/HO

Q: You've been the operations officer out here, for how long?

A: I came out in April (2001).

Q: So, you've been out here six months, seven months?

A: Uh, huh.

Q: And, you were here working the day of September 11<sup>th</sup>.

A: - Yes -

Q: ..which began like what? How did it begin?

A: You just want my rundown for that day?

Q: Yes, your rundown for that day.

A: I was sitting right here (his desk, admin. building at 119 FW/Det 1) and my girlfriend called me and said, "Did you hear what just happened?" No, so I heard that an airplane had crashed into the World Trade Center. Immediately I was thinking some sightseer in a Cessna 172, four-person airplane out sightseeing had gotten a little too close, or some guy that wanted to end it all and wanted to take a couple people with him. Right after that Laura<sup>1</sup> came down to my door and said that Darrin Anderson<sup>2</sup> is on the phone and needs to talk with you right away. So, hung up with Jen, went down (the hall) and Darrin said, "Did you hear what happened?" Same question, said that I heard an airplane went into the World Trade Center, and he said "Yep, you just be ready," not really know to the extent of what was going on at this point.

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<sup>1</sup> Senior Airman Laura Schauer, 119 FW/Det 1 information manager, Langley AFB, Va.

<sup>2</sup> Capt. Darrin Anderson, intelligence officer, 119 Fighter Wing, in Fargo, ND

Hung up the phone with Darrin Anderson, looked over at Mark Kelly<sup>3</sup> out there and said, 'Did you hear about an airplane crash into the World Trade Center?' He didn't. Nobody knew at this point over here what was going on, we didn't have any TVs on, no CNN<sup>4</sup> was running or anything. No channels for that matter. And with that, 15 seconds later the scramble phone rang. A lot of our folks were over here (admin. building) at that point, so, uh, I yelled "Scramble" and we all high tailed it over to the hangars.

Q: Just out of curiosity, I know it rings over there.<sup>5</sup> Does it ring over here someplace?

A: It rings on a telephone in the front office out there, so we all know when this special ring goes off, that chances are we are probably going to be scrambled. It's a hotline for NEADS, to approach here, command post and so on, tower.

So, I assumed at that point it had to do with this deal, the trade center, again not knowing to what extreme this whole incident was going to be. So, we ran to the other side and they (NEADS) gave us a Battle Stations order.<sup>6</sup> I went up and got the words<sup>7</sup> from the (Langley) command post real quick and we sat on battle

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<sup>3</sup> Senior Master Sergeant Mark Kelley, chief enlisted manager, 119 FW/Det 1, Langley AFB, Va.

<sup>4</sup> Cable News Network, 24-hour news operation distributed by satellite to cable television systems. CNN began live TV coverage after the first aircraft struck the World Trade Center tower approx. 0846 Eastern Daylight Time on Tuesday, 11 Sep 01.

<sup>5</sup> Reference to the scramble telephone line from North East Air Defense Sector, Rome. New York.

<sup>6</sup> Battle Stations is an order for pilots to suit up with G-suit, harness and flight gear, get strapped into the fighter aircraft and be prepared for immediate launch.

<sup>7</sup> "Words" referring to the directions given from NEADS and the most current information about a particular battle station order, or scramble order. A small enclosed cab from the second floor of the overlooking the Langley AFB flight line is equipped with secure radios and computers allowing classified information to be expeditiously passed to air sovereignty alert sites, such as 119 FW/Det 1.

stations a couple of minutes, so I walked down to give the guys<sup>8</sup> a quick intel briefing. They were sitting in the jets already and told them what had happened; again not knowing it was an airliner (that collided into the World Trade Center). Then, shortly after that, the phone rang in the hangar and Jay Jonson<sup>9</sup> answered it. He said, "It's NEADS and they need to talk with you." I got on the phone, I don't know who it was, but he said, "how many airplanes can you get airborne?" I said, 'we got two on battle stations right now,' and he said, "No, that's not what I asked. How many can you get into the air?" 'Well, with me, that makes three, we have three pilots total.' He said, "OK, you better get ready." So, they (NEADS) apparently knew what was going on right away, if they were going to scramble, launch the fleet. That is something that is unheard of.

So, I quick ran in, called Colonel Utecht<sup>10</sup> just to let him know our situation out here, that we were going to be without a SOF<sup>11</sup> on the ground so they could SOF from home and do what they needed to do to get more personnel out here, although we didn't know at that point that it was not going to be feasible, that transportation at that point was going to be nil.

So I went, got my gear, sat up in the jet and by the time I sat down we got a green light<sup>12</sup> to go. None of us at that point – Brad Derrig knew there was a second airplane (to hit the World Trade Center) – he's the only one 'cause he

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<sup>8</sup> Alert pilots on duty Tuesday, 1 September 2001 at 119 FW/Det 1 were Major Bradley Derrig and Capt. Dean Eckmann, both from the 178<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, 119<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing, North Dakota Air National Guard at Fargo. Maj. Derrig is a full-time instructor pilot with the 178<sup>th</sup> and Capt. Eckmann, is a pilot for Northwest Airlines in addition to being a 178<sup>th</sup> pilot.

<sup>9</sup> Technical Sergeant Jay Jonson, on duty flight chief for 119 FW/Det 1, Langley AFB, Va.

<sup>10</sup> Col. Richard Utecht, Commander, 119<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing, Fargo ND

<sup>11</sup> Supervisor of Flying

was inside putting his contacts on during battle stations, but Dean Eckmann and I did not know. I don't think Dean knew, anyway.

We took off and originally they gave us a zero-two-zero heading outta here, which does not bring us to D.C. but I think initially – and this is just my opinion – probably bringing us to New York, but I don't know that for sure.

Q: That, that was the presumption of Dean –

A: Yea, yea we all talked about that afterward, and I think that makes sense. Zero- two- zero brings us right up the coast. Then after that, they changed our order pretty quickly and gave us coordinates<sup>13</sup> and gave us a mission of CAP.<sup>14</sup> Basically what they were going to have us do – we were the only fighters airborne at this point that I know of, at least in our area. They gave us the coordinates wrong, initially, which actually gave us a turn to the southwest. The three of us did an alpha check to that point, which is basically we all double checked, 'Hey I got this heading, this distance.' So, we did that and three concurred, so we started to turn. NEADS yelled at us shortly thereafter, so obviously it was time critical at this point, got us going back to the north. We got the right coordinates after that and they gave us an order for max. subsonic (airspeed). Our speeds were probably point-nine-five going up there, point-nine-six, point-nine-seven somewhere around there.<sup>15</sup>

We got up to, uh, right appeared to be right over the Pentagon. I think the CAP point they initially gave us was Washington Reagan National Airport, which is right next to the Pentagon. By the time we got there, the Pentagon, it looked like it just started smoking. We probably didn't notice it going up there, but obviously

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<sup>13</sup> Latitude and longitude for a specific location, coordinates for the F-16 inertial navigation system.

<sup>14</sup> Combat Air Patrol

<sup>15</sup> True airspeed as measured in percentage of Mach

you could tell there was a pretty massive fire. At that point, it was sort of interesting, we were all monitoring – we have two radios, actually three but we weren't using the third, an HF<sup>16</sup> radio is only used in extreme cases which we probably got have got up in this case. We all monitored a common frequency so we could talk amongst the three of us but we were all on different uniform frequencies<sup>17</sup> talking with different facilities. Dean was talking to center, Brad and I were talking on different freqs. to Huntress<sup>18</sup> ground controller guys.

We got up there and the mission was to CAP, so we just basically set up a 20-mile CAP where we tried to space ourselves out evenly so we could commit whoever was closest to a target at that point. In there we got two pretty neat radio calls. One was a call on Guard<sup>19</sup> to every aircraft in the air. "All aircraft in the air, you are instructed to land immediately. Land at the nearest airport now." It was at that point I think we all realized something pretty bad was going on. Then, I think it was after that, then we got three pretty neat radio calls. Right after that they starting calling "airplane over the White House!"

Q: Just in the blind? Just –

A: Huntress was yelling at us. "Airplane over the White House! There's an airplane over the White House!" – pretty frantically. So Otis – Dean Eckmann, Otis – you say Otis and people start thinking about Otis National Guard (base, near Falmouth, Massachusetts) – Dean Eckmann scrambled down to start looking for somebody over the White House, but couldn't find anybody. We sorted out the problem and they (NEADS) did not know we separated into three different entities within the CAP, so were finding me actually, they were actually calling me out over the White House. We figured out that's what it was. So then

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<sup>16</sup> High frequency radio

<sup>17</sup> Uniform, referring to Ultra High Frequency radios commonly used for military aviation.

<sup>18</sup> Radio callsign for North East Air Defense Sector

<sup>19</sup> Guard, referring to the military emergency frequency, 243.000 MHz

we coordinated with Huntress, say hey, we have three separate identities, we have three different squawks for fighters, so they knew they had three different fighters they could commit in different areas, so they could commit any of us at any time.

Then after that, Huntress called and asked us confirm to that the Pentagon was smoking, that the Pentagon was on fire. We confirmed with each other that it was the Pentagon, called back and said 'Yea, it is' and they said, 'Yep, that's the word we just got, too,' so it sounded as if they had just gotten the word.

They scrambled tankers (unintelligible) out to the east, out over the ocean and one-by-one we each filed out there to fill up so we could keep two on CAP at all times. We'd keep one out.

Q: Just a quick question. One of the things Dean mentioned, I don't have my notes with me, they had you guys squawk<sup>20</sup> quad sevens (7777), and then, did you each get a separate squawk after that?

A: Yea, they eventually gave us three different squawks for the three of us, so they could keep track of us.

Q: OK. All right.

A: And at that point we were just there pointing out any target that was up there, any airplane that was flying, they wanted us to commit on.

Q: How did they pass that word?

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<sup>20</sup> Squawk refers to the four-digit Mode 3 numeric code used by civilian and military air traffic controllers to identify and distinguish individual aircraft on a radar display.

A: They didn't pass the word that they were to commit on each airplane, it was more like 'Hey, we have a target here' and they (Huntress) would split off the nearest fighter to that target. Really, we only had one or two significant ones in the north, and Dean Eckmann went up and IDed those. I know he forced down a small single engine airplane. That was an innocent bystander that had no idea what was going on at the time. Saw a fighter fly back, quickly got on the radio and landed, I know, shortly thereafter. He did overfly an airport or two and that gave us a little concern, initially. He didn't know what was going on but once he got the word, he got down right away.

Q: I think I remember that same thing.

A: Brad (Derrig) was split off to escort the Attorney General in (Attorney General of the United States, John Ashcroft), to Reagan National<sup>21</sup> I believe and then I was in the south at this point. I didn't escort anybody. They did have I believe a Citation business jet that I just watched, that was about it but I did not escort them to a landing. We were up there I would estimate for an hour, just us three, before I think at this point they were scrambling any fighter they could possibly get with any type of armament up. It seemed like everybody was coming up with different loads, different conglomerations. It seemed like if they could slap a missile on an airplane, it was airborne shortly thereafter.

Shortly thereafter "Wild" flight came up. They were vipers<sup>22</sup> out of D.C.<sup>23</sup> They came up and screwed everything up. One guy there appeared to have a bigger intel brief than we did, and I'm sure they all knew what was going on at this point while we were still in the dark. We never did get an intel brief on what had

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<sup>21</sup> Ronald Reagan National Airport in Washington, adjacent to the Pentagon.

<sup>22</sup> F-16 fighter aircraft

<sup>23</sup> The 113<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing, District of Columbia Air National Guard, based at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland.

happened.<sup>24</sup> GCI<sup>25</sup> does not have secure capability. Big, big effect. It certainly would have helped if we had got AWACS or some type of intel brief from somebody. I think we all were able to put two and two together while we were up there, that people were crashing airplanes into buildings. In fact, my first question for the crew chiefs when I got on that ground was "What else did they get?" I knew that he had got the Trade Center. I didn't know it was two airplanes but I know they got one into the Trade Center and later, that they got one into the Pentagon.

Q: "Wild" flight came on and you said they screwed things up?

A: Well, there was one guy up there who appeared to be a mission commander. We had a nice CAP going. What they should have done is leave us where we were at and have these guys spread out. Instead they starting spreading people out into different CAPS in the sky. I mean, it worked out OK, but I think when we left the CAP we were up for four hours total and Dean was up for five. When Brad and I left Dean was on the tanker, he came back to the CAP and didn't immediately realize we were gone. When we left there were 11 airplanes in the CAP that I counted. You just can't operate with that many. Basically, 11 airplanes that makes it 11 chiefs and zero Indians. Didn't work real well, but the point is they had plenty of fighters to commit should they have to.

A: We never got any word – this is probably fairly important – about any specific airliner that was involved.<sup>26</sup> I never did anyway. So, I know there's a lot of misconceptions out there about some airliner in Pennsylvania. None of us knew a darned thing about that I know of. Like I said, we were all on different freqs.

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<sup>24</sup> (Regarding two separate airliners hitting the World Trade Center towers in New York and the airliner that crashed into the west side of the Pentagon.)

<sup>25</sup> Ground Control Intercept

<sup>26</sup> Airlines hijacked or suspected of being hijacked aircraft



and they (Brad Derrig, Dean Eckmann) could have got different intel briefs. Talking with the boys afterward, it didn't sound like that.

Can I make a quick phone call? Can you shut that off?

Q: Sure.

(interview resumes)

A: Anyway, so back to the flight. Tanked a couple of times and then basically it was CAPing with the other airplanes. There was nothing really significant that happened after those three radio calls and the 11 fighters got on CAP, the FAA<sup>27</sup> got everybody on the ground pretty quick. I watched something on TV last night--

Q: -- on "60 Minutes"<sup>28</sup> did you see that? --

A: Yea. They showed the radar pictures --

Q: -- yea, that was pretty cool --

A: There 47-hundred airplanes, 47-seventy three or something like that flying and they got them all on the ground in two hours. That was amazing, absolutely amazing. First time that's happened. Nothing like that has every happened before, to ground every airplane like that.

(background -- "Sergeant Somdahl, call intercom one. Sergeant Somdahl, intercom one")

Q: That would be me.

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<sup>27</sup> Federal Aviation Administration

<sup>28</sup> "60 Minutes" is a magazine format news program broadcast by CBS, the Colombian Broadcasting System.

(interview resumes)

Q: Life at the tip of the spear!

A: I guess to get back to when Brad and I landed here. When I landed here, I pulled in there were troops and, I don't have an exact count, it seemed like there were missiles everywhere. I could tell, it seemed at that point like, World War III or something. We were getting ready to load every airplane we had which is what we did. Basically every asset we had out here<sup>29</sup> we got ready to go. We called in an IG guy, an F-16 driver –

Q: "Fifi" LaFond<sup>30</sup>?

A: "Fifi" LaFond.

Q: Mike Bob<sup>31</sup> is going to get a message to him. I'm going to need to talk with him over the phone, over a STU, because I'm sure he's got a fascinating perspective on all of this.

A: Oh, yea. He was the ground guy that coordinated a lot of the initial movements, a great guy. Actually, one of my instructors<sup>32</sup> down in Mississippi. Good guy.

Basically got back on the ground here. Colonel Connor was on leave, you probably know. So at that point it was "Fifi" and myself, Brad Derrig and Otis –

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<sup>29</sup> Four F-16 ADF fighter aircraft

<sup>30</sup> Major LaFond, assigned to Headquarters, Air Combat Command, Langley Air Force Base, Va., on the Inspector General's staff.

<sup>31</sup> "Mike Bob" is Lt. Col. Michael Connor, commander, 119<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing Alert Detachment, Langley Air Force Base, Va.

<sup>32</sup> Flight instructors

Dean Eckmann – that were running the place. We got four airplanes loaned with as much as we could and Richmond<sup>33</sup> joined the show shortly after.

Q: Was it, did they show up on Tuesday night (11 September) or did they show up on Wednesday?

A: Well, in their plans<sup>34</sup>, when something like this happens, they do not have weapons at Richmond.

Q: Oh, so they have to come here?

A: In a situation like this, they automatically scramble, well not scramble, but

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Trying to coordinate to get weapons out here, to get the proper folks out here. We had airplanes without pilots, we tried to get "A" model pilots out here. There was two Tucson guys that were qualified "A" model pilots on the east coast at that point, one in D.C. and one in Boston, and we started coordinating to get them down here. The D.C. pilot did drive down. I don't remember his name. The Boston pilot was just starting to drive when we called him and said, ' You might as well go back' because Rick Gibney was on his way out<sup>36</sup> with the FEMA director.

<sup>33</sup> 192<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Wing, Virginia Air National Guard, stationed at Robert Byrd International Airport, Richmond, Virginia.

<sup>34</sup> Reference to North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) operations plans

<sup>35</sup> Within the 119 FW/Det 1 compound at Langley AFB

<sup>36</sup> Major Rick Gibney, 178<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, 119<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing. Gibney was directed to fly an F-16B two-seat aircraft from home station in Fargo, North Dakota to Bozeman, Montana on 11

Q: He came out with -820?<sup>37</sup>

A: He brought the FEMA director from Montana to Albany.<sup>38</sup>

Q: The D.C. guy, so when did he get here? Was that Tuesday night?

A: No, I think that was Thursday when we got him down here.

A: Through that day and for the rest of the week, we got numerous battle station calls. Obviously, NORAD being a little trigger happy to get guys airborne. Not a lot of scrambles.

Q: This is still Tuesday?

A: Tuesday and throughout the rest of that week. Obviously in terms of ops tempo, as far as scrambles go, has picked up huge in the last six – seven weeks.

Q: All right. Wednesday (12 September) I don't think any flying took place, right?

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September 2001. He picked up a civilian, the emergency management director for the State of New York, and was directed to fly that civilian into Albany, New York as quickly as possible. The Federal Emergency Management Agency had a nationwide workshop at Bozeman, Montana scheduled to discuss response to terrorist events on 11 Sept., which was cancelled after the attacks on New York City and the Pentagon. The F-16 flight by Gibney allowed the New York emergency management director to return to the state, as all commercial and private aviation was under FAA emergency grounding order.

<sup>37</sup> Aircraft 81-0820, a "B" model F-16 from the 119<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing.

<sup>38</sup> Gibney was originally tasked to transport Mr. Joseph Allbaugh, Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency from Bozeman to Washington, D.C. A U.S. Air Force C-17 cargo aircraft was diverted to transport Mr. Allbaugh, allowing Gibney to fly the mission to New York.

A: I don't think so.

Q: That is what everybody told me. Tuesday was very busy, Wednesday was quiet.

A: Wednesday was quiet. CAP flights probably, I don't know for sure. Probably a CAP in there and a scramble. It's all a big blur.

Q: Yea, I know.

A: I'm trying to go in a chronological order and remember exactly what took place. I remember the night of the 11<sup>th</sup> there were probably 20 troops that spent the night here<sup>39</sup>. We were obviously operating under Threatcon DELTA<sup>40</sup> at that point, and we had people sleeping everywhere, between Richmond and us. Everybody was called in here. Most people stayed the night, got cots, got meals brought over about midnight. The 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Wing ops group commander came over, I remember, about 10 minutes after midnight just to see how we were doing with his assistant. We gave him a quick tour, walked in and saw all of these people scattered, on the couches, on cots and on the floor. He couldn't believe what he saw. "It's their ops tempo all day, sir."

We worked with Richmond for the next week and a half, two weeks up here. That got to be a struggle, actually, because of, basically –

Q: Because of different airplanes and different missions?

A: And who was in charge, actually. They had a Lieutenant Colonel out here who had a problem with me being the DO here at the time. That was an issue. He didn't like that and he briefed me one afternoon. I told him, "Why don't you

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take care of your two airplanes and I'll take care of our four airplanes" and they he said, "Well how about this? This is what's going to happen. I'll be the temporary detco<sup>41</sup> until your boss gets here." So, I called back to Colonel Utecht right away with that and said, "Hey, I want to let you know what this guy is thinking." I didn't talk to Colonel Utecht about that. Who'd I talk to about that? I talked to somebody in Fargo and they passed the message to Colonel Utecht, I think it was Wobbs<sup>42</sup>, and Wobbs said "I don't think that's a good idea." Anyway, I think it lasted for about 15 minutes and that got squashed, and Richmond left shortly, shortly thereafter, brought their jets back home. I know they had siting restrictions at home with the missiles, so they thought they should be here initially but then siting restrictions have sort of gone by the wayside here and at a lot of other units around the country.<sup>43</sup> There's people sitting out there with ordnance that shouldn't be sitting there with ordnance, but hey. You sort of accept the risk when things like this happen.

Here's something significant, I guess. They started setting this CAP up, actually I think from that point on<sup>44</sup> the CAP has not left D.C. or New York.

Q: I think that's right. I think it's been continuous since that time --

A: -- Since 9:30 that morning when we got there, 10 o'clock that morning, it has not stopped. There's been four over D.C. and two over New York all the time. Initially NORAD, CONR,<sup>45</sup> NEADS<sup>46</sup> all working to coordinate who's going to fly these CAPs. That was a real struggle with us as far as manning and jets go and

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<sup>41</sup> Detachment commander.

<sup>42</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Michael Wobbema

<sup>43</sup> Reference to weapons safety rules and Department of Defense explosive safety licenses, which limit the location and quantities of munitions allowable.

<sup>44</sup> Following the 119 FW Alert Detachment scramble on 11 September 2001.

<sup>45</sup> Continental United States NORAD Region, or CONR. Better known as First Air Force, headquartered at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida.

<sup>46</sup> North East Air Defense Sector, based at Rome, New York

keeping them code one. Our jets were outstanding in the first couple of weeks, we didn't have any breaks at all,<sup>47</sup> which really helped since we only had four airplanes here. Initially they had us flying four CAPs a day. We were running ragged there, trying to schedule pilots and so on. I remember calling back to Fargo and saying, "Hey we need this many pilots." They couldn't believe it. Their jaw hit the ground. "Have you looked at the ATO<sup>48</sup>?" Look at what we're tasked for now. So, it's a kind of deal where do we call NORAD and say, "We can't do it" or do we try to beef up out here and comply with what they're asking for. That's the approach we took, to do what they want us to do, which I think is the right approach. They did run us ragged out here. Guys working awfully long hours and trying to maintain some semblance of crew rest, with Langley ops going on it was pretty challenging.

Also with the ATOs. I can't imagine trying to write the ATO for the whole country, trying to sit alert at all of these different sites with all of these different configurations, different airplanes, pilots scrambling in and out trying to get assets here and there, it had to be challenging. What that led to is the ATOs were consistently wrong.

Q: When did they start getting right as far as what actual capabilities were there? When did they start getting better?

A: I would say about a week or two after. Basically what happened is they would publish an ATO, we'd see that it was wrong, call back, tell them our requests of what we think it should be and they'd basically give us a verbal contract saying, "OK, go ahead and do that. We'll change it when we get a chance." That's what happened for about the first week. I was calling NEADS every couple hours trying to coordinate that. Finally about a week and a half, two weeks later, after

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<sup>47</sup> Aircraft maintenance problems

<sup>48</sup> Air Tasking Order, a classified planning document with requirements for a specific future time period, usually one day.

Richmond left, that we got on the schedule that we're on now, flying two CAPs a day and sitting with two aircraft on RPI<sup>49</sup>. That's how we sit now (25 October 2001) with eight pilots, we figure we can maintain that schedule. Mike Bob and I still doing the grunt work with six assistants and Fargo coming out and flying. It's a challenge.

Q: You've talked about some of the significant things that have happened and how the tasking has evolved. Personally, what are the big problems that you're dealing with now? Obviously it's everything from facilities to people not knowing the established procedures, people coming and going. What are the big rocks here?

A: Well I think you can go from large scale to small scale. Large scale being that the last several years we have scaled down air defense so much, they're just not prepared to sit alert with what they're manning all units to do alert. We've seen that just at our sector, calling us and saying 'please mail us your LIMFACS<sup>50</sup>. Tells us what's holding you guys back.' I just read something today. They published all of the LIMFACS for all the facilities in the northeast saying what do these people need, and there's a lot of money that's going to have to be dumped in these facilities to get back up to where we were back in Cold War days, which is basically the kind of pot that we're sitting with. As far as large scale, big picture, that's been challenging.

It seemed like, initially, it seemed like a lot of the regs,<sup>51</sup> a lot of the smaller stuff they just pushed aside and said, "Just do the mission, now. Once it simmers down then we'll start working from big to small with the problems." Now we are getting to the point where since we've got this regular schedule going, now we're starting to deal with what facilities to people need, what are your siting limitations,

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<sup>49</sup> Response Posture Immediate. Available for immediate scramble.

<sup>50</sup> Limiting Factors

<sup>51</sup> Regulations



what are your facility limitations. As far as this alert detachment is concerned, it was designed for 18 full-time folks. How many to we have working here now?

Q: Pretty close to 30-some. Right now.

A: From Fargo?

Q: Say 15-20 from Fargo plus the 18 permanent.

A: So we're looking at close to 40 folks out here. That type of thing is what's being looked at now. Since we're only sited for three loaded airplanes, we're looking at moving half of our operation to the other side (of the Langley ramp). So then you look at what do we need on the other side, you know that we'll need some sort of indoor facilities, it would be nice to have a hangar indoors should something hard break, have a lot of people work on it, some type of comm. over there. We have the handheld radios but you know batteries go dead and their repeaters go down so you can't use those --

Q: -- and its not secure --

A: -- unsecure, so you need a back up, a phone, a STU would be great. Who's going to run that flying operation? Are we going to have separate flying operations or are we going to run the flying operations from over here? Is supply out of there, AGE<sup>52</sup> equipment, what do we do with that, transportation to and from. I'm sure we'll have people constantly going back and forth. We might as well have a bus going constantly.

Q: These are all of the things getting worked right now?

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<sup>52</sup> Aerospace Ground Equipment, used to support aircraft maintenance and munitions functions.

A: Yes. (pause) I know, every shop in any unit across the country is dealing with different situations now, anywhere from finance with manday and per diem issues, different cars, billeting, to just like services. The number of aircrew meals have gone up significantly from the flight kitchen, to billeting. Space A<sup>53</sup> billeting is non-existent here at Langley. Airplane tickets with delays in airports. Now we're dealing with things like weather back in Fargo, trying to get parts out here for our broken airplanes, versus airplanes. Right now we're doing airplane and pilot swaps today. Fargo is solid ice (runway) with surface winds of 40 knots, you know, just another wrench in the puzzle. Right now we're trying to stand out here, we have operations that have to be met versus training at home. We're trying to get more airplanes out here and Fargo doesn't want to release all of the airplanes we've requested. They're wondering 'do we really need all of the airplanes' that we've requested. Just like, we request over a month ago life support and intel personnel. They showed up this morning. I think that was after Marshall Kjervik<sup>54</sup> came out here and said, "You guys need life support and intel." I said "That's why we asked for them a month ago." (laughs) It's nice to get those folks here. Fortunately, it's a kind of a job where they're not going to come out and they're not going to be busy for eight hours a day. However, they are going to make a significant difference. They're going to take a lot of the workload off of us. Not only are they taking that workload, but it's going to be more complete. You know, I could keep up with the life support issues but it's going to be sub-standard. To have somebody out here, it's going to be back at par. That's what we need.

Q: So, I'm assuming, Fargo is planning to have that as a continuing thing out here then?

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<sup>53</sup> Space Available

<sup>54</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Marshall Kjervik, 119<sup>th</sup> Operations Group Commander. Kjervik served at one time as the Operations Officer for 119 FW when the Alert Detachment was stationed at Kingsley Field, Klamath Falls, Oregon.

A: Intel, probably are until we stand down. There are a lot of plans in the works now. Have you seen the slideshows<sup>55</sup>? –

Q: -- I haven't lately –

A: They're looking at, you know, the big picture, long term goals about what do we want to do as far as alert facilities go. Where are we going, whose going to be going, what's this going to do to the AFE requirements.<sup>56</sup> It's a puzzle that I'm glad I'm not dealing with, to be honest with you. Long term here, it looks like we'll go back to be just alert and not CAPing. If that happens then I'm sure those folks will go home. In fact I think we'll send everybody from Fargo home. That's what the 18 folks from here do, granted the ops tempo with these scrambles is going way up. Before, we were looking at unidentified airplanes coming over the water or the occasional drug smuggler. Now it's –

Q: -- looking inward?

A: -- looking at NORDO<sup>57</sup> airliners, NORDO meaning they're not talking to 'ya. You're looking at, not to be prejudiced, but Arabic accents on the radio. If you have a pilot out there that's an American citizen who has some Mideast accent, right away it's going to raise speculation with the sector whether this is a true deal or not. We've had scrambles like that out here. We had one where an American Airlines 757 squawked 'hijack.'

Q: Really. Is that 74-hundred?

A: A 757

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<sup>55</sup> (from current intelligence briefings)

<sup>56</sup> Alert Force Evaluation, conducted on air defense alert facilities to test their response capabilities to a simulated threat aircraft or cruise missile.

<sup>57</sup> No radio

Q: No, the code is –

A: 75-hundred. Then they squawked 77-hundred, which is an emergency. Then it either went off or it went back to a normal squawk. But it was significant enough for the sector to say 'what's going on?' Then we get scrambled and these guys got runway alert, which means they taxi out to the runway and sit there. So were able to talk secure to those guys from the SOF perch and we gave them an intel brief before they went up, "Hey here's the situation. You have an American Airlines jet that's squawking hijack right now." So now, there's guys sitting at the end of the runway with live missiles, with two guided missiles that went into the World Trade Center<sup>58</sup> and ready to go up and watch 200 American eyes peek through windows out of an aircraft, you know, that's the mindset that's going on. It's pretty whacky.

Q: I don't remember hearing about this one.

A: There's another. A Southwest Airliner that deviated from a flight plan and the pilot had a very distinct Arab accent that they were going to scramble us on. I know it's ran through every pilot's mind out here if that situation should arise, how am I going to feel when I get down? I think it's something that we're all glad none of us has had to encounter. If it ever does happen, I certainly feel that the pilot has to hit the red button<sup>59</sup> plus everybody on board. What an ugly situation.

Q: On both of these, on the American Airlines one, they stayed on the ground?

A: No, they got airborne and trailed it for a long time. We passed it off to another pair of scrambled fighters and they trailed them for a while –

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<sup>58</sup> Referring to American Airlines Flight 11 and United Airlines Flight 175

<sup>59</sup> On the F-16, a small red button on the side stick controller is the last switch activated before an air-to-air missile is fire.

(TAPE ENDS – recording restarted on reverse side of cassette)

Q: The other airliner, do you remember what happened on that one?

A: I don't think we got airborne on that one. We did have 9/11 Classified Information  
battle stations call.

We also got, I think this was on the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> of September, we were getting intel reports on this, we never did get a call on this, we got intel reports there was three unidentified helicopters flying over a nuclear facility in one of the Carolina states. So we were waiting on that one. But you know, if this would have happened before September 10<sup>th</sup>, we would have just thought, 'Oh well, probably a news crew.' Maybe it's the Army doing some exercise. Now it really makes your ears pick up, what's going on this time? The threat now is no longer Bears<sup>60</sup> coming over the Pole,<sup>61</sup> it's no longer fighters coming from the east, it's crop dusters and airliners. It's a sad deal.

We got scrambled on a C-130 that was supposedly emitting a white powder over Ohio.

Q: That one I did hear about.

A: That one was in the middle of the night. A couple guys went up.

Q: And why you guys? Was there nobody else closer?

A: We asked the same question and I guess we were the closest and they wanted somebody there quickest, and you know, Fargo being the best and

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<sup>60</sup> Russian Bear bombers

<sup>61</sup> North Pole

everything, they sent us. (Laughs) When you care enough to send the very best.

There was another scramble yesterday.

Q: That was just –

A: It was a helo<sup>62</sup> I guess. Slow mover out in our training area actually, they went out and IDed him.

Q: Civilian?

A: I don't know if it was military or civilian. (Unintelligible) But in the last month since we got this normal schedule, now basically the whole month has consisted of just fine tuning what we're doing out here. The CAPs have been relatively flawless, aside from no weather that moves in. There's been times where we've been up for an extra hour here and there. Our jets held up great the first two weeks and since then it's been a maintenance nightmare. They've been working their tails off. We've had one hot brakes, three EPU<sup>63</sup> activations, you know, put an airplane out of commission for a while.

Q: And those EPUs they were all in one week, within a few days of each other?

A: Yea, they were all within a week. Two were Bud Hensel<sup>64</sup>, so we blamed a lot on him. (Laughs) Just kidding Bud if you ever hear this. (Laughs)

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<sup>62</sup> Helicopter

<sup>63</sup> Emergency Power Unit. The F-16 EPU burns a diluted solution of hydrazine for emergency electrical and hydraulic power. Hydrazine can be a health hazard.

<sup>64</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Cecil "Bud" Hensel, 178<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron pilot, 119<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing from Fargo.

You know, like one for example happened in the chocks, sitting right out front here. Some of our operational concerns, our procedures have always been if the EPU fires, don't taxi. Well the next thing you know, we have eight fire trucks sitting in the throat to alert. That stops our entire mission. And we're coordinating, trying to get rid of that, we also have airplanes in the CAP and jets on RPI and so on. You know, shutting down alert now – well in the past you could call us off status here for two hours for maintenance and the answer you be, 'no problem.' Now a days, it's not a player, not acceptable, so we've really had to revamp a lot of our procedures. The mission as a whole new meaning now, I think, and I've only had this job for six months. I've been learning a lot, quickly.

Q: I know that you guys get a lot of help from the Wing (1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Wing, Langley). How has that relationship changed?

A: We deal a whole lot more with them. Their ops tempo is just as bad as ours, so I mean you almost feel guilty going over there and squeezing in another inspection here, have a meeting on this, and they give us ramp space for additional airplanes. We've worked with their intel, their command post is great. Life support has always been nothing but pleasant to work with. Intel has been over here on several occasions debriefing our scrambles and so on. We've also worked a lot with the Richmond intel guy, "Sweaty Dog." He's helped us out quite a bit. I've never talked to sector (NEADS) as much as I have six, seven weeks.

Q: If you had, if you and Mike Bob got word that you had an open checkbook to fix things, or if you had the ability to fulfill a wish list, what kinds of things would you do? 1-2-3-4 ?

A: New barns that would be number one. New barns that are better sited for weapons. If we could get six indoor facilities instead of four. Our doors work

good but you know, every once in a while, no kidding a bolt will come off, just fall off from being an old facility. They worked good and fulfilled the mission before September 10<sup>th</sup> but since then it's substandard. Everybody realizes that and we're not the only unit going through that. Colonel Connor and Marshall went to a meeting last week, and Colonel Connor came back. His big thing to me that really sunk in was "Every unit is having the same problems we are."

Q: Are those things don't get built overnight, either.

A: They don't but now with Congress proposing all of this new money, the President asked for \$ 20 billion and got 40. When's the last time that happened?

Q: Not that I ever remember.

A: Me neither. So, I think the barns are number one. Two would be, probably, from an operational standpoint, which is what I do out here, get better intel – not as far as the folks, but we have one SIPRnet computer<sup>65</sup> and one STU. You

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answered were Fargo (119<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing). You know, again, Fargo being the

<sup>65</sup> Secure Internet Protocol Router Network, a dedicated computer and Internet system for sharing classified information up to the SECRET level.

<sup>66</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Robert Becklund, 178<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, 119<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing.



best, we can handle that stuff but to me that's unacceptable. We all need to have good, secure communications.

A:

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You know we need

another TV for review, for tape review<sup>69</sup>. You know, things before that were had to get money for, this is all of what it takes right now. I don't know if you know how secure works but they load these different fills, (noise) depends on what fill they are using. From my operational standpoint, that's what I'd like to see.

A: Now, personnel out here with eight pilots, life support was a mess. I went over there this morning with Aaron<sup>70</sup> and said, "Here's your baby. Fix it."

Q: (laughs)

A: Well he didn't like that, but it keeps him busy. He's doing something and he's helping out, and he'll probably develop some procedures, this is what we'll do to keep it all straight. There was nobody out here to see the mess, and if he's out here, gets it fixed in three days, or if he needs to be out here full-time, fine. For now it's nice to have intel out here.

Q: What happened to the new crew building? What happened to that?

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<sup>67</sup> The retreat in rural Maryland used by the President and Vice President.

<sup>68</sup> Data Transfer Cartridge, a device where classified data can be loaded into an F-16 ADF fighter and can capture weapons firing data while airborne.

<sup>69</sup> Viewing 8mm videotapes of the radar data and the Heads Up Display aboard the F-16. These tapes are used to validate training objectives and record critical mission details.

<sup>70</sup> Senior Airman Aaron Siek, life support specialist, 178<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, 119<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing

A: You know I'm probably not the right person to ask on that. Mark Kelly<sup>71</sup> and Colonel Connor have been dealing with that. I do know that they did show up three or four days ago to look at the site, to start construction and it was put off.

Q: Because of security concerns?

A: Bo, because I think it was more because of they're not really sure of what's going to happen. Are we going to built it? Are we going to move the whole facility? What are we going to do? If I had my druthers, I would extend this alert facility, take this taxiway out,<sup>72</sup> right here, extend the facility out or move the whole thing down. Get six barns, keep this admin. building, put up six barns with new crew quarters down there. I mean this is a good location to have, there are a whole lot of assets in Norfolk and this is a pretty high vis. (visibility) area, plus we're so close to D.C., this is an excellent alert location. I don't think this one is going away. I know the priorities are for winter units first and Langley doesn't get that much winter weather. Hence the reason we live here. That's not exactly what they're looking at, moving the alert facility, but there are changes being made, so should we really start on this building now? I would be a shame to build it (the new alert crew quarters) and then find out we're moving it 200 yards to the east. I believe that's where it stands. The plans are still there and I'm thinking they're still thinking they'll build it, but like I said I'm not the right person to ask.

Q: I got to talk to Mike Bob, too. That's a question for him.

What do you think will be happening for the foreseeable future? From now to six months out?

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<sup>71</sup> See footnote three

<sup>72</sup> A taxiway leading to the NASA Langley Research Station hangar and complex, adjoining Langley Air Force Base.

A: I think that we'll stop CAPing. Not the nation, but Fargo (119<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing) and we'll maintain the CAP over D.C. When you look at it politically, it's probably not needed but at the same token if I was the one making the calls, there is no doubt I would have someone over D.C. If you took the CAP away and something happened, it would be unrecoverable, completely unacceptable. You have to keep them there. I think the CAP will remain but it will not be tasked to our unit. I think there will be an entire revamping of air defense around the country. I think we had seven alert sites this happened and I think that will more than double. I think that alert sites will now be beefed up, not just more sites but I think the sites themselves will have some money dumped into them. The way the alert sites went down in the early '90s – you know, obviously if this stuff calms down we could get into a lull, a complacency we were in before, but I have a hard time seeing that happen. I think this will stick in people's mind for a long time. There are still people trying to get over Pearl Harbor<sup>73</sup> and that's 60 years ago now, and this was three times that. None of us were around at Pearl Harbor, but when they use your own equipment to kill your own people, it has more of an impact. I just think an entire beef-up and I think the AFEs will be restructured and I think our presence overseas will be a little less. I think that homeland security a little more of a priority, seeing that we are vulnerable. I also think that – these are just Craig Borgstrom's – almost, the days of conventional bombing and so on, it will always be a player for us. Obviously I think the bigger priority for us will be the chemical and biological warfare. I think money will be dumped into detection and prevention of that.

Q: Personally, how has this changed you. Has it changed you at all? These events?

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<sup>73</sup> The sneak attack by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan on Sunday, 7 December 1941 that precipitated a U.S. declaration of war against Japan, and by extension the Axis powers of Germany and Italy.

A: As far as my personal ops tempo, yea. Last weekend was the first weekend I've taken off in seven weeks. Granted, before on the weekends I would only come in for three or four hours, but I would be in every day check the SIPRnet, check messages and so on, make sure we're not missing anything. As far as flying missions and so on, I think every pilot has the same attitude and that is, 'you gotta do what you gotta do,' which stinks in this situation. I'd much rather see a foreign fighter than a 757<sup>74</sup> with a bunch of your friends on board. You know personally, the ops tempo. I get a chance to work with Colonel Connor on a daily basis and it's just him and I. We've developed a pretty good working relationship, we seem to work well together. Most of the enlisted guys out here really see when things like this happen, you really see the true teamwork when the shit hits the fan, everyone set aside everything they had. It wasn't a question, to me. It was the end of the fiscal year. People have use or loose leave, a few asked about it and there was no question that everyone was working long hours. You know, you'd probably get off at seven. The next thing you know it's 11 o'clock at night before you're getting out of here. You know people are getting tired. Like last night. The guys that were doing the CAP stayed late because of weather and Richmond broke a couple of jets or something.

Q: So, two nights in a row?

A: Two nights in a row, yea. Last night was another one. The only difference was last night, they knew before they went up that they were going to stay and hour-and-a-half late. Then they got extended even longer because of the Richmond broke jets, then the weather moved into the east coast and socked in places with fog, so that's when they tasked us. You know, that breaks into our crew rest cycles and then (bad) weather in Fargo, so its non-stop, you're constantly flexing. You know, I make a schedule – sometimes I feel like putting out the schedule, letting everybody look at it, say "See it?," and then rip it up.

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<sup>74</sup> Boeing 757 commercial airliners were among the aircraft used in the 11 Sept. attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

All right, that's probably what should have happened or what's actually going to happen shortly....

Q: (laughter)

A: That's the most challenging thing out here, I think, is the schedules with the flying and the pilots, the coordinating with NEADS and back home. Crew rest on alert is non-existent. My first day here, on Sept. 11<sup>th</sup>, I got in at 7 in the morning on the 11<sup>th</sup> and left for home at 9 o'clock on Wednesday night. 36 straight hours, including getting scrambled at 3 o'clock in the morning.

Q: And that was the one to go out over the, uh.....?

A: That was the one to go to West Virginia to find a small airplane. Somebody was flying around in the early morning, the 12<sup>th</sup>, at 3 in the morning.

Q: Well, I was thinking there was something out over the Atlantic. Maybe I'm getting things mixed up.

A: We basically had a procedure during the first couple of days that we wanted to get two airborne, regardless, so were starting three to launch two. The first three days we had that procedure, and so at 3 in the morning we got scrambled after being at work already for 20 hours trying to get some rest. Safe? Probably not, but we were really out of options at that point. Everybody else was running ragged all day. I was the first one with some semblance of crew rest but I didn't get airborne that morning. The Richmond guys both were code one, so I started and then shut down and it was good, we were able to maintain legality.

Q: (long pause) OK, I think that does it for now. Anything else you want to say for the record?

A: Thanks for your hard work. I don't want your job now!